The Liturgical Year Introduced

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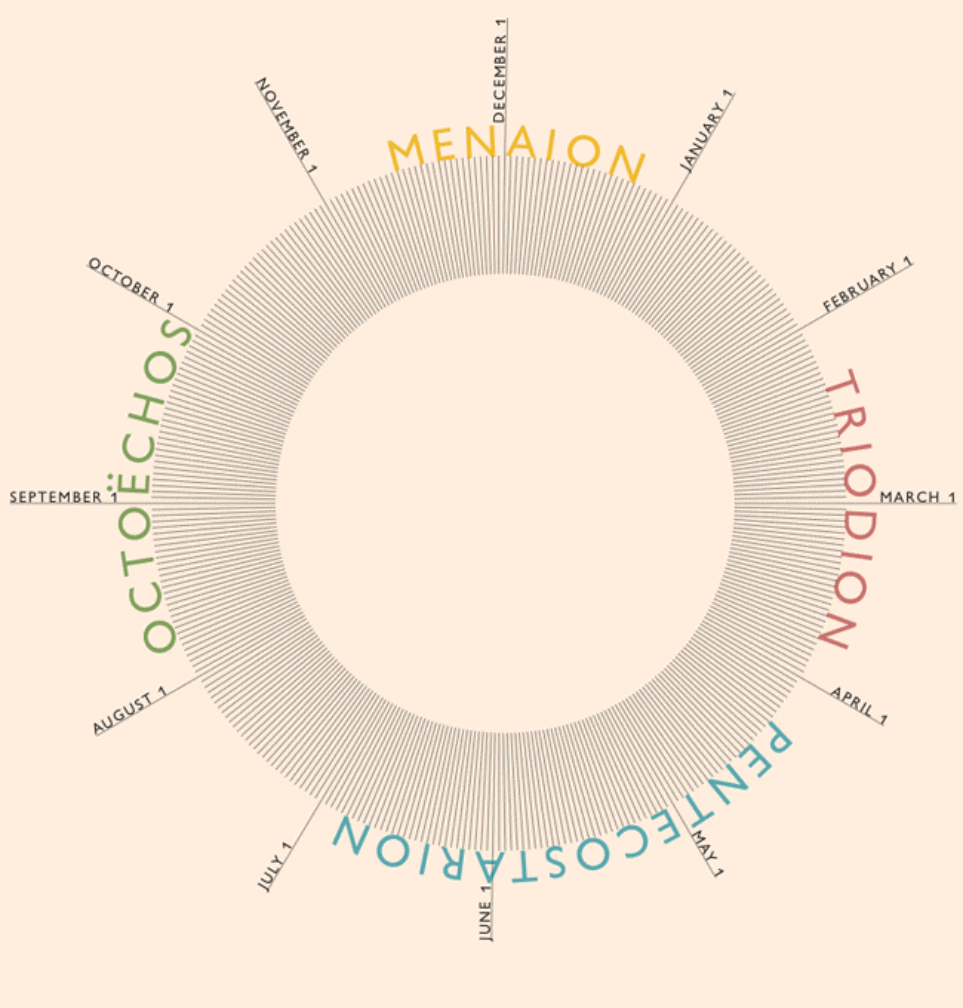

The Four Books Used

Four books contain the festal services necessary for the liturgical year.

The Menaion contains the feasts of the Lord, the Mother of God, and the Saints, for every day of the year.

The Triodion contains the services for Great Lent, the three weeks before, and Holy Week.

The Pentecostarion contains the feasts of Pascha through Pentecost and All Saints.

The Octoëchos provides eight one-week cycles of services in one of each of the eight tones.

Of these, the *Menaion's* feasts are immovable, while the others are moveable.

Immovable feasts occur on the same calendar day every year; the moveable feasts can fall within a certain range of dates.

The discussion of the moveable feasts is somewhat complex, so we will begin with the simpler immovable feasts of the *Menaion* in the next diagram.

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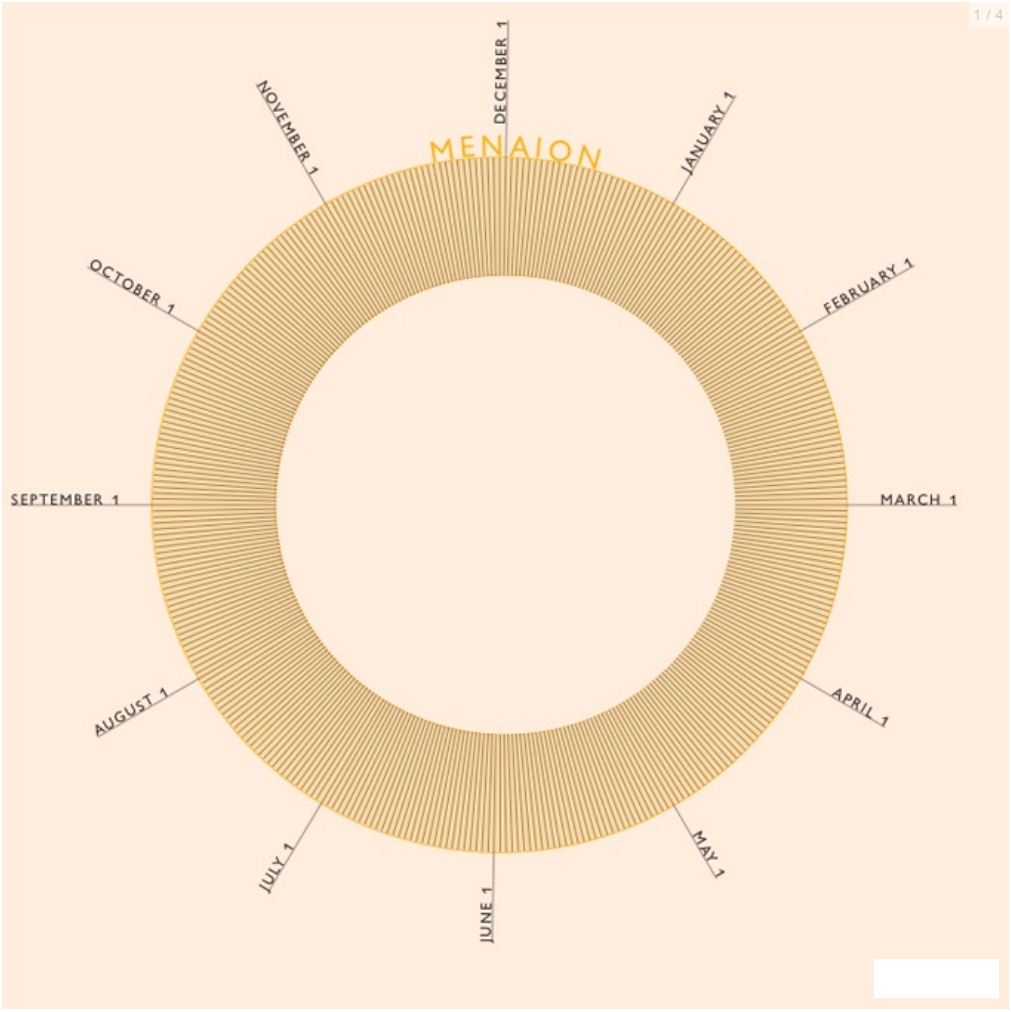

The Menaion

The name *Menaion* comes from the Greek word for month. The *Menaion* contains the services for every day of the twelve months of the year. One volume is dedicated to each month, and the services themselves are feasts in honor of the Lord, His holy Mother, and the Saints.

Thus the December volume includes the feast of our Lord's Nativity on the 25th, the feast of St. Nicholas on the 6th, and so forth.

Since the feasts of the Menaion always fall on the same day each year they are called immovable, and do not change from year to year.

The feasts of the other books are moveable, since they depend on the date in which Pascha (Easter) falls in any given year. The manner of determining Pascha will be discussed next.

N.B. The diagram only has 360 days and is not intended to be strictly accurate, but only to give a visual representation that will make plain how the books work together.

To stop any diagram from advancing as a slideshow, click on the middle pause button, and on either arrow to advance or reverse at the desired pace.

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Earliest Pascha March 22	Sundays	Latest Pascha April 25
January 11	Publican and Pharisee	14 February
18	Prodigal Son	21
25	Meat-fare	28
February 1	Cheese-fare	7 March
8	Orthodoxy	14
15	St Gregory Palamas	21
22	Holy Cross	28
March 1	St John of the Ladder	4 April
8	St Mary of Egypt	11
14	Lazarus Saturday	17
15	Palm Sunday	18
March 22	**Pascha**	**25 April**
29	Thomas Sunday	2 May
April 5	Myrrh-bearers	9
12	Paralytic	16
15	Mid-Pentecost	19
19	Samaritaness	23
26	Blind Man	30
30	Ascension	3 June
May 3	Holy Fathers	6
10	Pentecost	13 June
17	All Saints	20

TRIODION

PENTECOSTARION

How to Determine Pascha

Pascha falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. The vernal equinox is March 21, so Pascha can never fall earlier than March 22. The latest that Pascha can fall is April 25. These dates are 34 days apart.

Once these two dates are determined, the earliest and latest possible dates for all the other feasts that depend on Pascha can be set. This cycle of the moveable feasts based on Pascha is called the Paschalion.

Working backwards from Pascha, we find that the first feast of the *Triodion,* the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, can fall as early as January 11 and as late as February 14, with all the other feasts of the Triodion following.

Working forward from Pascha, we can determine all the feasts of the *Pentecostarion:* Thomas Sunday can fall as early as March 29 and as late as May 2, and so forth.

The latest date on which each of the feasts of the *Triodion* and *Pentecostarion* can fall is 34 days after the earliest. The following page shows that difference only for the date of Pascha, by which everything else is set.

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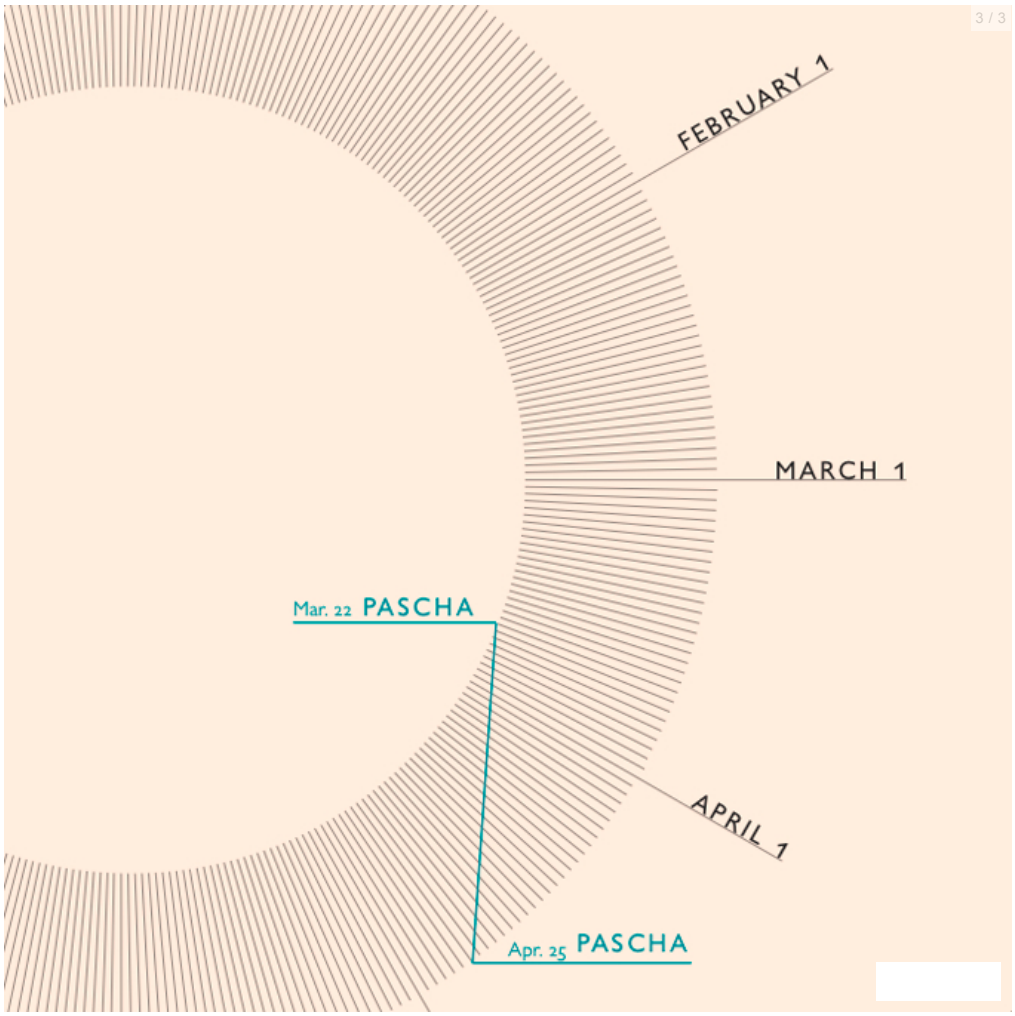

The Earliest and Latest Dates for Pascha

The earliest day on which Pascha can fall is March 22.

The latest is April 25.

If we connect the two days, the line will intersect all the other days in between. The difference is 34 days.

The importance of the date of Pascha cannot be overemphasized, because the whole Paschalion is reckoned from it, governing when all the feasts of the *Triodion,* the *Pentecostarion,* and the *Octoëchos* fall in any given year.

In this diagram we show the earliest and latest possible dates for Pascha; in the following diagrams, the earliest and latest possible dates for each feast of the *Triodion, Pentecostarion,* and *Octoëchos* will be shown in the same way, with a line connecting them, which will account for all the possible dates on which each of the feasts can fall.

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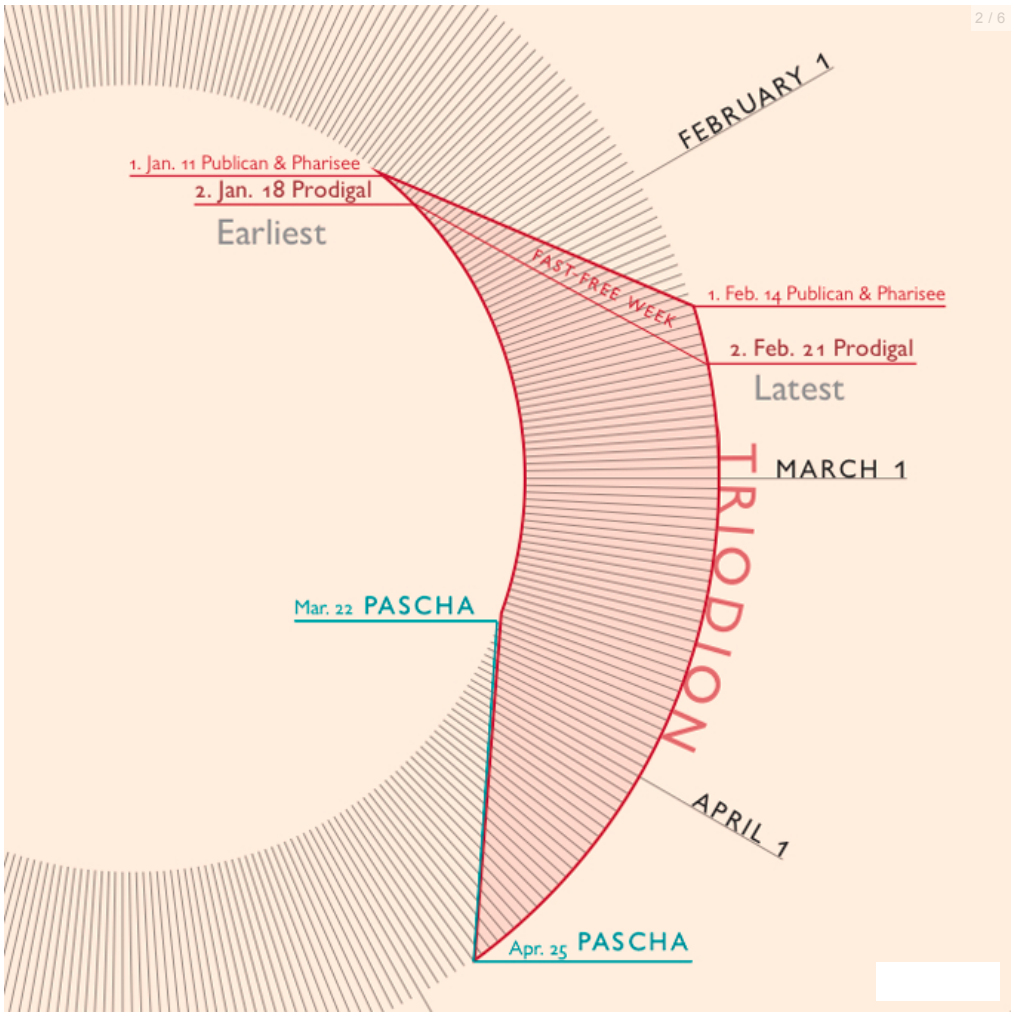

The Triodion

The *Triodion* begins on the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, which can fall as early as January 11 and as late as February 14.

Great Lent begins on Clean Monday (which follows Cheese-fare or Forgiveness Sunday), and it ends on the Friday before Lazarus Saturday, which is the day before Palm Sunday.

Holy Week begins with Lazarus Saturday and ends on Holy and Great Saturday.

The *Triodion* therefore comprises not only Great Lent, but the three preparatory weeks before, and Holy Week as well.

The hymns of the *Menaion* continue to be used with the *Triodion* until Lazarus Saturday; after that only the Synaxarion of the *Menaion* is used daily.

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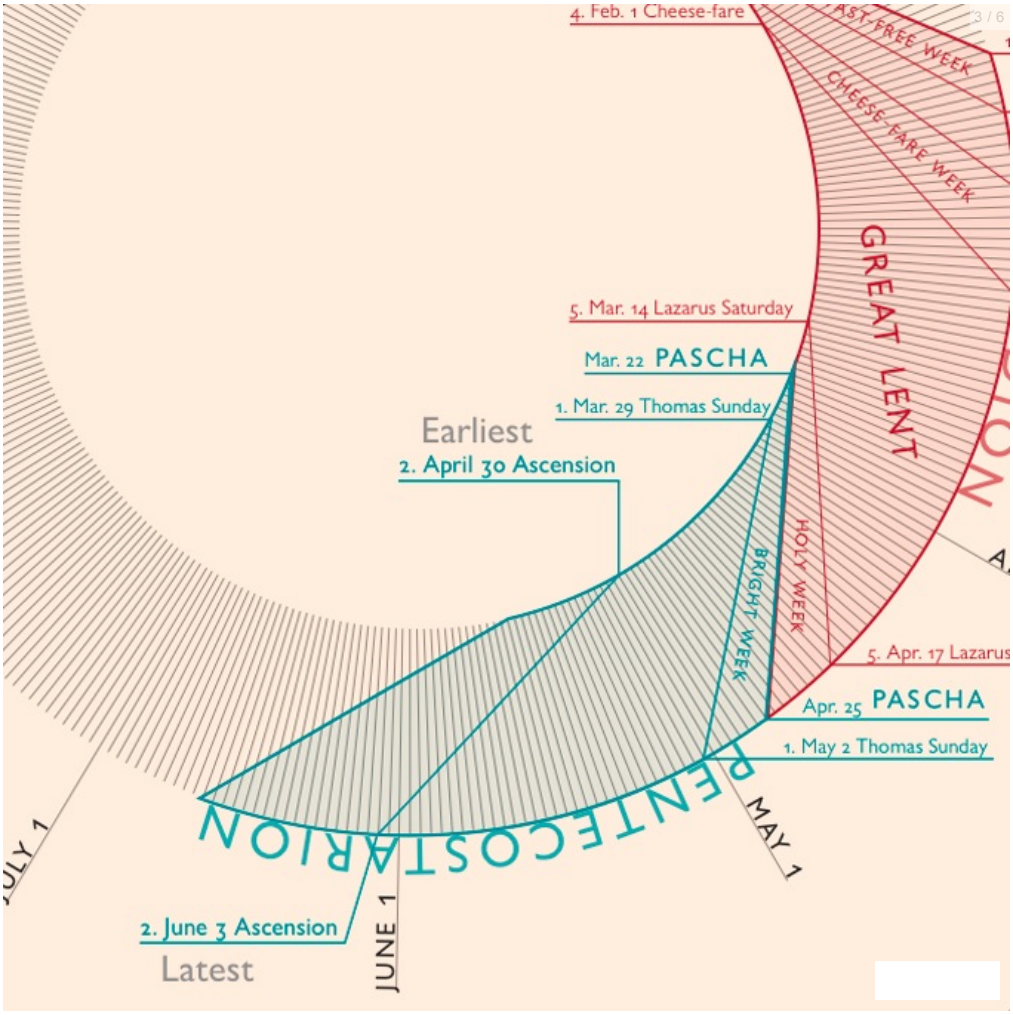

The Pentecostarion

The *Pentecostarion* provides the feasts from the Sunday of Pascha, to Pentecost, through All Saints – the Sunday after Pentecost.

Bright Week, from Pascha till the following Saturday, is fast-free and only the Synaxarion of the *Menaion* is used daily.

On the Monday after Thomas Sunday, we resume using the hymns of the *Menaion* daily with those of the *Pentecostarion*.

On the Monday after All Saints we begin the Apostles' Fast.

Since the Apostles' Fast begins the day after All Saints, its beginning is based on the moveable Paschalion. But its end occurs with the feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul, June 29, which, unlike the moveable feasts of the *Pentecostarion,* is an immovable feast of the *Menaion:* at this point the moveable Paschalion meets the immovable *Menaion.*

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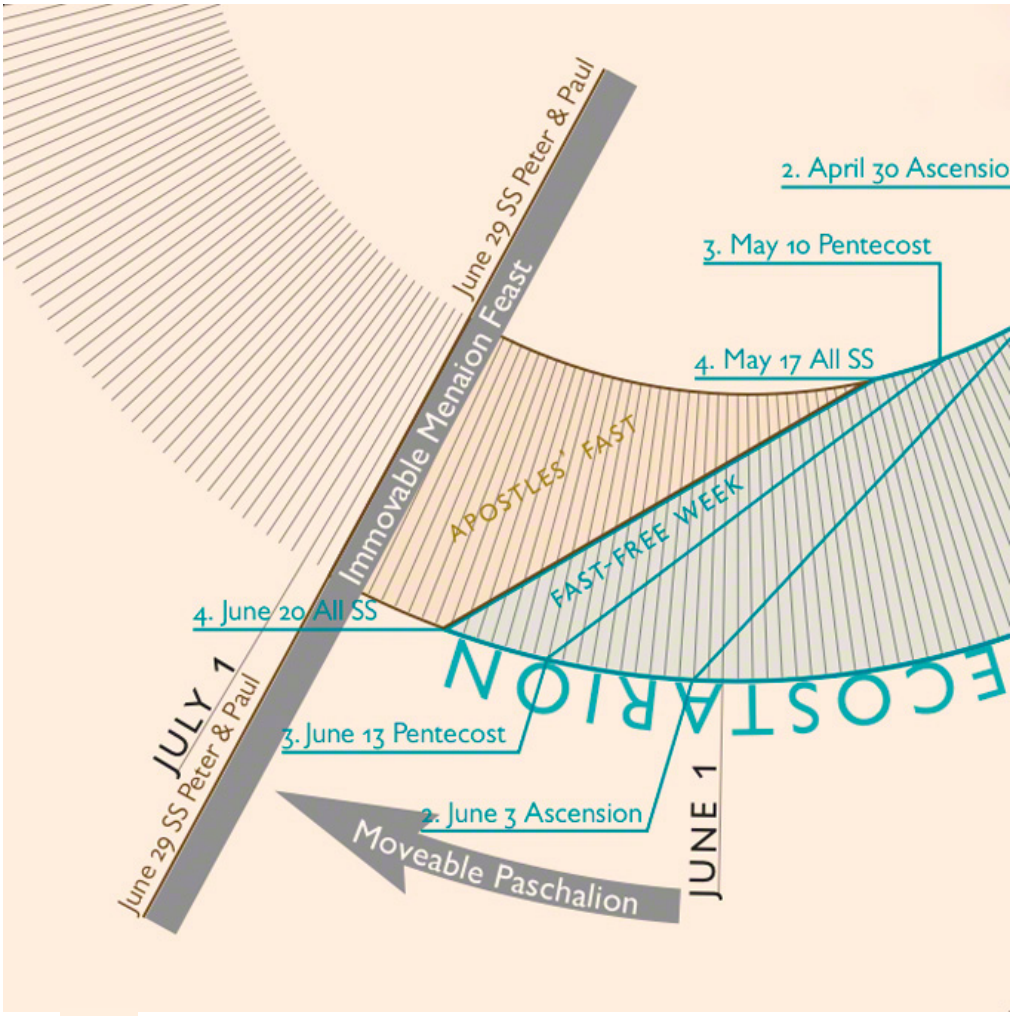

The Apostles' Fast

The beginning of the Apostles' Fast – the Monday after All Saints – is based on the moveable Paschalion, and can begin as early as May 18, and as late as June 21. But its end, being fixed by the feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul, has no earliest/latest dates: the Fast always ends on June 29. Therefore its length varies from 8 to 42 days.

All these diagrams follow the traditional (or Julian or Old) festal Calendar of the Orthodox Church. When the moveable Paschalion follows the Julian Calendar, but the immovable *Menaion* feasts follow the Gregorian (or New), the *Menaion* feasts fall 13 days later than they are intended to do when used with the Paschalion. Because of this, in any year that the Apostles' Fast is 13 days or shorter, it disappears when the *Menaion* feasts are celebrated according to the Gregorian Calendar.

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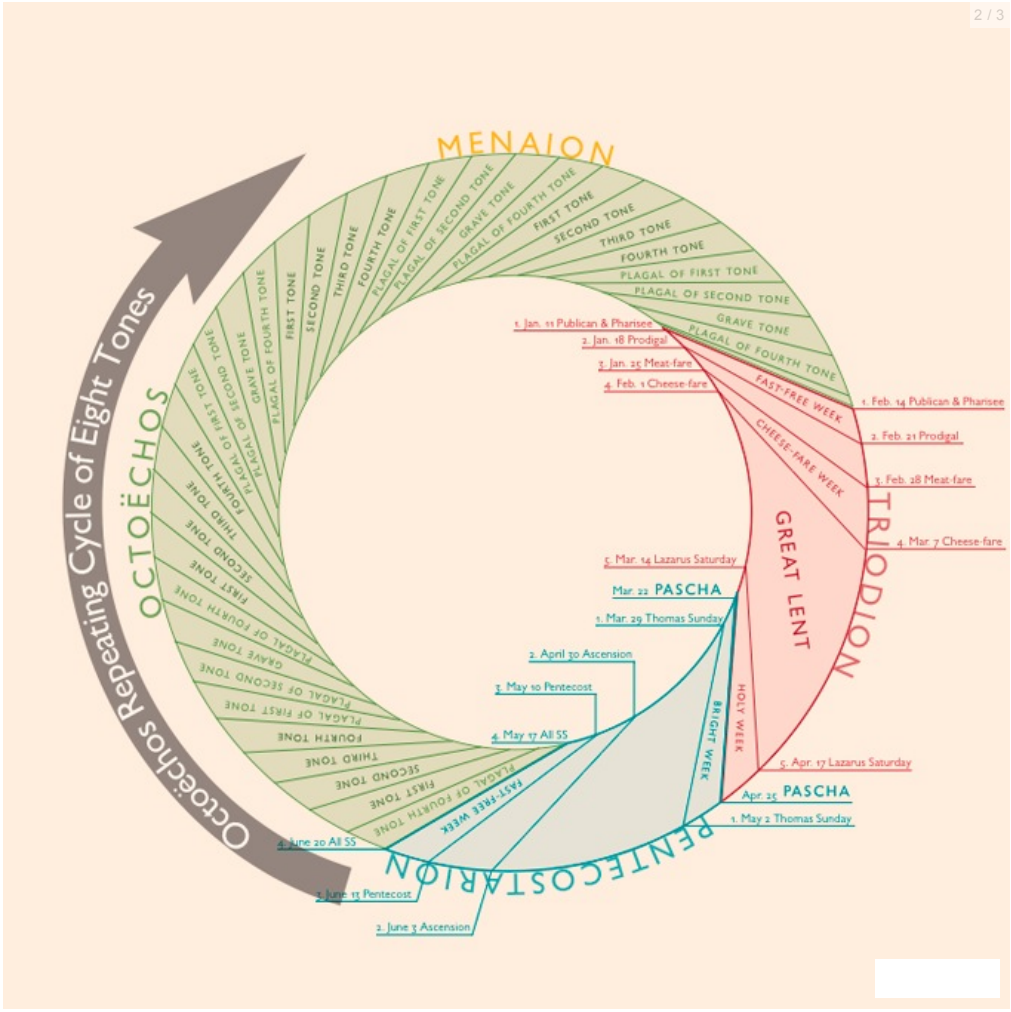


The Octoëchos

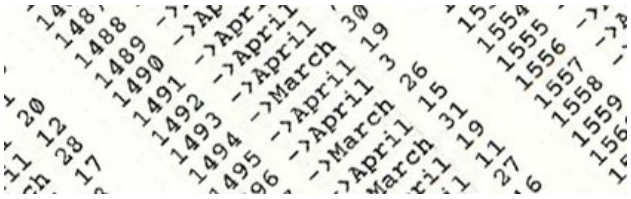
On Thomas Sunday, the first Sunday after Pascha, the *Pentecostarion* begins using hymns taken from the *Octoëchos* in First Tone.

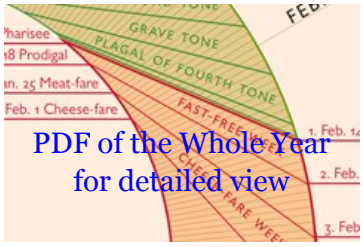
Each of the following weeks (with the exception of Pentecost and its week, which would have been in Grave Tone) employs hymns from the *Octoëchos* in the successive tones, until the Feast of All Saints, which employs the Resurrection hymns of the *Octoëchos* in Plagal of Fourth Tone. We continue in Plagal of Fourth Tone for that whole week; and on that Monday after All Saints, we resume using the daily hymns of the *Octoëchos* (when applicable) with the *Menaion*.

On the first Sunday after All Saints, the cycle of the eight tones of the *Octoëchos* begins with First Tone, and continues cycling through the eight tones until Great Lent of the following year.

A yellow layer superimposed over the *Triodion, Pentecostarion,* and *Octoëchos* to represent the feasts of the *Menaion* shows that the only two weeks in the year that the *Menaion* is not used are Holy Week and Bright Week.

PDF of the Date of Pascha for A.D. 1 to 2500





PDF of the Whole Year for detailed view

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